

A periodic newsletter chronicling the preservation of Menokin

Conservation Crew Tackles the NE Corner of the Ruin

By Palmer Ware

In April and May, the John Greenwalt Lee Company, consisting of conservators John Lee and Ellen Hagsten, architect Charles Phillips, masons Terry Hooker and Garrett Brown, and archaeologists Jim Gibb

and Dio Kavadias, continued the excavation and stabilization of the Menokin ruin. The team focused primarily on the northeast and northwest quadrants, consolidating a severely deteriorated corner stone, excavating and cataloging all of the dressed stone that collapsed into the northwest section of the cellar, and stabilizing the east exterior wall and an interior wall in the south passageway. More than half of the quoins from the northwest corner have been located, as well as most of the window surrounds from the second floor windows. In May, Menokin intern Palmer Ware, a rising sophomore at the University of Virginia, assisted the conservation crew with their work. Below are Palmer's observations on the experience and her introduction to this "above-ground" archaeological site.

Over the past several weeks I have experienced a little taste of life at Menokin, both as it is now and as it was in the eighteenth century. I have been eavesdropping on the conservation jargon being thrown back and forth between architect Charles Phillips and



Summer intern Palmer Ware is a rising sophomore at the University of Virginia

conservator John Lee, and observing archaeological procedures as they are meticulously practiced by Jim Gibb and Dio Kavadias. It has been interesting to see that although Francis Lightfoot Lee and family are gone and Menokin is in ruins, they are very

much present in the work done and the decisions made here in 2006. This has been made clear to me

especially in the work I was able to do with the archaeologists at the ruins in my first week here at Menokin.

My second day on the job, I was sent over to the ruins, intent on burdening Jim and Dio with my inexperienced presence. I had explored archaeology once before, and although it was an informative experience, it was a very different setting than the above-ground site of Menokin. When I arrived, they were working on the northwest quadrant of the house. I quickly learned how methodical the process is. The house is divided into quadrants and work is done by separate quadrants, but also by room. Having removed the majority of the stone from the collapsed walls, they were now going to work at removing the debris and artifacts from the northwest quadrant cellar. It was meticulous work at first, as there was

no clear ground space on which to stand, and we had to be very careful of the fragile wood debris and crumbling plaster from the walls. We divided the northwest quadrant into smaller areas and started work from there, one mini-quadrant at a time. We began by removing brick shards and placing them on palettes arranged to imitate the layout of the quadrants.

The next step was to remove the numerous wooden artifacts from the cellar. Before they could be removed, each artifact had to be mapped with a theodolite, measured, and drawn on its own field sheet. A theodolite, I learned, is a machine used to map a three coordinate point (x, y, z) signifying the location of the artifact with respect to other points mapped on the site. The measurement is taken by holding a prism on, or at a fixed location above the artifact, while the



Jim Gibb and Dio Kavadias use the theodolite to mark an element before excavation

theodolite shoots a laser beam at the prism. The laser bounces back to the theodolite, measuring the exact distance between it and the artifact. The coordinates must be recorded on the field sheet for each artifact. These coordinates are being used to create a 3-D wire frame CAD model of the ruin that shows each artifact

in situ before it is excavated. This data is also linked to an Access database that (continued on next page)

contains discreet records on each excavated element.

At some point during the process of measuring, mapping, and drawing the artifact, it must be tagged. The tags for Menokin are stainless steel dog tags with the year the artifact was found and the number in the order of which it was found (for example, the 300th artifact found in this year would be labeled 2006-300). Because the artifacts will not be analyzed immediately after they are excavated, it is important to clearly mark it and fill out its corresponding paperwork. This sums up my work while the



The conservation team focused primarily on the northeast corner of the ruin

archaeology crew was here. The numbers were meticulous at times, but the learning process was invaluable to me.

What I have witnessed is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to progress made on the Menokin ruins. In the weeks before I arrived, the dressed stone which had collapsed in the northwest quadrant of the house had been tagged, mapped, and removed to gain access to the cellar. The conservation team had recognized the urgency of stabilizing what is left of the northeast quadrant, which is the most intact of all of the quadrants. This corner was collapsing more by the day, and the corner stone and some surrounding stones were cracked and becoming more and more insecure. Placing steel bars in its place, they removed the cornerstone and used a tractor to align the corner, which had shifted out of place. Mortar was inserted to fill the cracks and to replace the failed original mortar. To replace the cornerstone, the team decided to construct a load bearing replica out of concrete using the remnants of the original to line the outer edges, to maintain aesthetic integrity. The finished product serves the same structural purpose as the original corner stone. John Lee will ultimately attempt to make the new stone look natural by

filling the areas around the original shards with appropriately colored Jann Mortar, which, when applied properly, is able to imitate any type of stone. After most of the crew had left, I went out to visit the ruins and John was

sitting on a board on the ground working this Jann Mortar into the new corner stone. His craftsmanship is truly amazing to watch. He took a smooth putty-like substance and worked it into the spaces between the pieces of original stone, texturing it adeptly to make it look almost exactly like the surface of the original stone.

It is remarkable to see the ruins transform as progress is made on them. Although I

have only been here a short while, I already feel attached to Menokin; it has become something important to me. It is my opinion that anyone who gets the chance to experience a small portion of its evolution would feel the same way. I am excited to see where the subject of my newfound attachment will go. There is a long road stretched out ahead for Menokin, but its future is vastly overwhelmed by its past. At risk of sounding cliché, if the walls (stones, joists, chimneys, mantles, etc.) of Menokin could talk, their words would fill several volumes. That is why this work is important: ultimately, it will result in a Menokin that will remind us of what it once was, tying us to the past. ~

Masonry and Wood Conservation Workshop Held at Menokin

On May 20, the Menokin Foundation in partnership with APVA Preservation Virginia and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources offered a rare opportunity for owners of historic properties, historic site administrators, craftsmen, and the interested public to participate in a “hands-on” workshop

that explored the state-of-the-art techniques in wood and masonry conservation that are being employed at Menokin. John Lee, Ellen Hagsten, Charles Phillips and Dio Kavadias of the John Greenwalt Lee Company, the firm overseeing the stabilization and conservation of Menokin, demonstrated how art and science must come together when dealing with such a fragile structure to the 40 workshop participants.

During the morning of the May workshop, participants gathered at the King Conservation and Visitors Center for an overview of the project, including details on the archaeology performed at the site, as well as the mortar, wood, and masonry conservation work. Following lunch, participants convened at the new storage facility and then the Menokin ruin to work with the conservation team in their field laboratory.

After an extensive tour of the ruin site, participants were guided in practical



Architect Charles Phillips discusses traditional masonry construction with workshop participants

mortar analysis methods, and watched as mortar for filling in voids in the masonry of the ruin was made. The conservation team demonstrated the stabilization of wooden structural elements through an innovative consolidation approach. This method involves replacing the missing core of the beam and reattaching or wrapping the remaining sections of original wood surfaces around the core. The workshop, also sponsored by the APVA’s Northern Neck Branch, is the fourth in a series offered statewide by APVA Preservation Virginia and the VDHR. ~

Storage Facility Completed

The Menokin Foundation opened the doors of its new storage facility, adjacent to the King

Conservation and Visitors Center, to the public this spring. The 3,000

square foot building, designed by landscape

architect Will Rieley and constructed by Mulqueen Custom Builders in Warsaw, features clerestory windows that provide light and air circulation, as well as a spectacular truss system that provides structural support and a dramatic interior. The building houses the architectural elements excavated from the Menokin ruin and serves as an additional training and conservation space. It was completed through a generous \$100,000 grant from a Richmond-based foundation which requests to remain anonymous. Menokin's president, Helen Turner Murphy remarked, "We were delighted to receive this grant and see the completion of the storage facility.~

New Staff, New Trustees and New Summer Hours

In March, the Foundation hired new Assistant Director Beth Reavis. Beth, a Texas native and mother of three boys, brings bookkeeping and office management experience to Menokin through running her own small business. She has proven fundraising events skills, and most recently managed several successful fundraising events for a local private school. Former assistant director, LaToya Ball-Tate, joined the planning department of Westmoreland County where she has the opportunity to learn and work with GIS mapping system. The Foundation wishes a fond farewell to LaToya, who brought her talents and sunny smile to Menokin

for three years, and a warm welcome to Beth.

Also in March, the Board of Trustees selected three new members who will start their tenure at the June 29 Board



The new storage facility to the left of Visitors Center houses architectural elements excavated from the ruin.

meeting. Russell G. Brown, a resident of Richmond County, is an officer with Northern Neck State Bank and an enthusiastic supporter of the study of Northern Neck history. Mrs. Martin Kirwan King, also a resident of Richmond County, has been an active volunteer with the Virginia Historical Society, the APVA, and the Garden Club of the Northern Neck to name only a few organizations, and brings a personal and knowledgeable connection to Menokin as the spouse of the Foundation's founder and first president. John Zehmer of Richmond is a leader in Virginia's professional preservation field and served as the Executive Director of the Historic Richmond Foundation and as the Capital Area Director for the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Starting in May, Menokin began its new summer weekend hours that will last until October 31. The property is open for tours Monday-Friday from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, and on Saturdays from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm.

From November to April, Menokin remains open Monday-Friday from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, but is open on weekends by appointment only. ~

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Help Us Match a Grant for Further Work on the Ruin!

The Menokin Foundation recently received a generous \$25,000 challenge grant from the Roller-Bottimore Foundation to continue with stabilization work on the northeast quadrant during this season. Please consider a donation to the Menokin Foundation to help us meet the \$25,000 and receive this funding. Masonry conservation work needs to be conducted during the spring, summer and early fall before temperatures drop below freezing.

Bluegrass Legend Sparks Foot-Tapping and Flat-Footing at This Year's Festival

Dr. Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys headlined this year's Menokin Bluegrass Festival, held on May 6, which also included the Seldom Scene, Old School Freight Train and the Gas Money Band. Beautiful weather prevailed and the Festival attracted approximately 1,700 people to Menokin. The Tayloe family, led by Foundation Trustee Tayloe Emery, Anne Tayloe Neumann and Courtney Tayloe Altaffer, again produced the Festival on behalf of Menokin under their catchy moniker "Deaf Dog Productions." Menokin's good neighbors, The Old Timers Hunt Club, came through yet another year to coordinate parking. The event netted just under \$11,000 for the Foundation, raised awareness of the organization's mission and activities, and brought top-notch bluegrass music to the Northern Neck. The Menokin Foundation extends its warmest thank you to the Tayloe family for organizing another great festival! For more information on the 2007 Menokin Bluegrass Festival, visit: www.menokinbluegrass.com.



The crowd enjoying the Bluegrass Festival



Helen and Tayloe Murphy



Dr. Ralph Stanley and grandson Nathan brought the crowd to their feet.

An appreciative fan's e-mail to Menokin...

Hello, I just wanted to thank you for putting on the Menokin Bluegrass Festival. This was my first year to attend, but I plan on making it a priority for next year. I am a native of the Northern Neck and I am very proud to be here. The crowd yesterday and everything about the event was just wonderful. Everyone was cordial and caring and the bands and especially Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys made me very happy to be a Virginian. I missed Dr. Stanley some time back when he and his band were in Fredericksburg and had regretted it ever since. When I found out that he was going to be in Warsaw I didn't waste any time to go out and grab the tickets. It was like he was coming just for me! I was reared in Richmond County, and the older I get the prouder I am of it. We are a dying breed, but a proud and humble people and I feel truly blessed to have been able to spend the day at Menokin!



Dr. Ralph Stanley signing a fan's T-shirt



Approximately 1,700 people attended this year's Festival.

President's Message: A Long Term Solution for Preservation & Education?



Helen Turner Murphy

Spring and summer are always busy seasons at Menokin! The warmer weather allows visitors to explore more comfortably the beautiful, lush woods and trails of our 500 acre

property on Cat Point Creek. Spring also brings the Menokin Bluegrass Festival and the start of a new conservation season on the ruin. This particular spring ushered in the beginning of the Menokin Foundation's second decade. We stated in our 2005 *Annual Report* that the Menokin Board of Trustees would be revising its strategic plan, vision and guiding principles. The Board worked with an outside facilitator on the revision during the winter months, and in March approved the revised strategic plan as a living management document that leads the Foundation into its next 10 years. I am pleased to report that the revised plan is available on the Menokin web site at: www.menokin.org.

The *Annual Report* also outlined the Board's intention to devise its long term vision for the ruin and how the Foundation would get there. The Trustees have opened the door to the possibility of the reconstruction of Menokin but believe that the hands-on preservation learning process is as important as the final completion of conservation work at the Menokin ruin. We are faced with the challenge of protecting the ruin from further deterioration, while at the same time presenting the property in a manner that furthers the public's understanding of how the house was built, its original appearance, and the historic context in which it existed. Creating a safe, accessible working and learning environment at the ruin is also a challenge that needs to be addressed.

The John Greenwalt Lee Company, a conservation group based in Annapolis, Maryland, is leading the Menokin Foundation in its mission to preserve and interpret our National Historic Landmark. Two of its principals, John Greenwalt

Lee, a materials conservator, and Charles A. Phillips, AIA, have proposed the use of structural glass as a solution for long-term stabilization and interpretation of the Menokin ruin. They have created a model that illustrates this concept. The "glass house" idea is a solution that provides structural stability, protects the ruins from the elements, places the house in a more proper physical context, and creates a safe and accessible environment for learning and teaching. If the glass structure were completed, the protective shelter over the ruin would most probably be removed.

The structural glass concept merges the best of 18th century building technology with that of the 21st century. It is inspired by projects that use similar technology, but on a much smaller scale, including: the Menil Collection's Byzantine Chapel in Houston; the Benjamin Franklin House in Philadelphia; and the Anne Arundel County Courthouse in Annapolis.

The model demonstrating the "glass house" idea at Menokin is the first step in articulating and understanding the concept. This initial model shows a light armature carrying panels of structural glass that fit to the mass of the Menokin structure. The system provides some loading to the walls, but is modular enough so that the individual panels of glass can be removed when needed as the stone walls are rebuilt.

It also functions as a skeleton for reintroducing conserved architectural elements. For example, as floor joists are set back into their pockets in interior walls, they could rest on the glass armature in the missing walls. This allows for sections of floor to go back into place and the re-creation of missing rooms that visitors can enter. The fine interior woodwork, now in storage at the Visitors Center, can also be re-hung within the glass armature and viewed within its original setting. By storing

Menokin's artifacts in their proper three-dimensional locations, the visitor can study them and make connections that are virtually impossible if the artifacts are separated from one another and removed from context.

While the technology necessary to create the glass structure at Menokin is used quite frequently on modern buildings, this technology needs to be transferred to managing a historic ruin where the first goal is not the immediate reconstruction of the building. The value here is being able to "connect the dots" and preserve the artifacts, creating the mass of the building true to form and shape but not in the same materials, and allowing the visitor to look through that creation as a vitrine, a visible building, in which the remaining artifacts are presented.

A range of professionals, including engineers, architects, and experts on structural glass, are needed to work with John Lee, Charles Phillips, and the

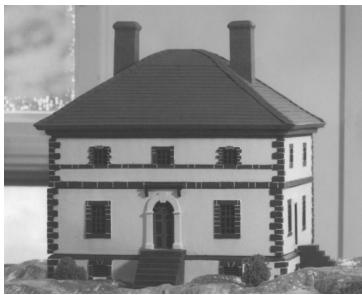


Model of the "glass house" concept

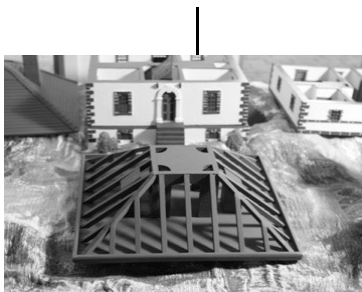
Menokin Foundation on the research and development of the concept. This project provides a revolutionary, elegant, yet functional method of stabilizing the ruin and creating a long-term training opportunity for students and the general public, while never hindering measured reconstruction of the ruin. The Foundation will be exploring this concept over the coming months and I look forward to reporting on our progress. ♪

Model Arrives at Menokin

Jimmy Harris, a resident of Warsaw, recently delivered to the King Visitors Center a to-scale model of Menokin and its two outbuildings. Mr. Harris completed this detailed model as a gift to the Foundation, and used the 1940 HABS drawings of the house to make the replica. He stated, "I enjoyed doing this project since it brought the home to life for me. I wouldn't have spent the time in constructing a model of something that was already built that you could walk inside and view it first hand."



Menokin model built by Jimmy Harris



The model's different stories can be removed for interior views

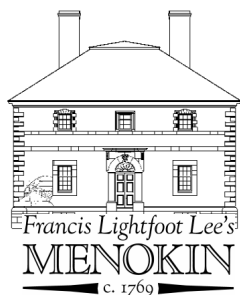
"The Foundation is thrilled with this new addition to our Visitor Center, and it helps us to better tell the story of Menokin," said President Helen Turner Murphy. ~

Menokin to be Featured at VHS Banner Lecture

The Virginia Historical Society (VHS) will feature Menokin as part of its Banner Lecture Series on November 16, 2006. Calder Loth, senior architectural historian at

the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, will explain the history and architecture of the site and will outline plans for its future during his lecture entitled, "Menokin: Virginia's Most Unusual Preservation Adventure." The lecture compliments the display of the Menokin dining room woodwork that is on loan to the VHS as part of its "Story of Virginia, an American Experience" exhibit.

The lecture will take place at VHS, which is located at 428 N. Boulevard in Richmond. Reservations are not required and admission is \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors, \$3 for children and students. The lecture is free for VHS members. For more information, call 804/358-4901 or visit: www.vahistorical.org/news/lectures.htm. ~



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